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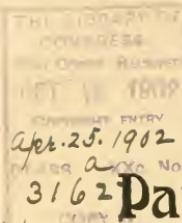
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Cuban Tea

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Her Cuban Tea.

Humorous Monologue for a Woman.

By PAULINE PHELPS.

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CHARACTER: MRS. HAMILTON.

SCENE: A prettily furnished sitting-room. Mantel draped with Cuban flags.

MRS. HAMILTON [*speaking outside*]. Let me know the moment the grocer comes, Bridget. [*Enters.*] He isn't coming, I know he isn't. It's time for the guests to arrive, and I haven't a thing to give them. That's what comes of living in a country-house three miles out in the wilderness. Oh, it's cruel of Charlie, cruel! Didn't he promise faithfully to order the cakes and tea, and write it down in his notebook?—and now he hasn't sent a single thing. If he'd ever loved me the least in the world, he would never have left me in such a strait. [*Tragically:*] Everything is at an end between us—and how shall I get through the afternoon with a breaking heart and no tea?

[*Excitedly:*] There's the bell—perhaps it's the grocer. [*Despairingly:*] No, it's the front door, and she's showing them right in.

[*Pantomime of meeting and shaking hands with two guests.*] So glad to see you. [*Pause.*] Thank you.

[*Pantomime of smiling sweetly at different guests.*] Yes, it is quite an original idea. I am indebted to dear Charlie for it. [Aside, viciously:] Oh, if I only had him here for a minute. [To guests:] Another cup? Yes, the men are fond of it, and then it's quite a tonic, you know. Why, no, I don't think it will fly to your heads.

[Aside:] Dear me, that cider was a present to Charlie; I don't know a thing about it. Everybody does act a little queer, but they seem to be enjoying themselves.

[In response to question:] Why, I don't know. We might. [Aside:] Sing with a breaking heart? How gay they are! Well, I don't think it's going to be a failure, anyhow. [To guests:] I don't know what the latest patriotic songs really are. So sorry I haven't a piano. "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night"? Yes, we might try that.

[Aside:] Dear me, I believe the cider has gone to their heads in good earnest. Old Mrs. Burroughs has her hat on one side, and she's beating time with both feet. I never saw such a jovial and talkative lot before.

[To guests:] What is the trouble, Mrs. Simpson? Dear me, don't take on so. "Hot Time in Old Town" such a pathetic song? Well, perhaps it is, though it never struck me that way before.

[Aside:] It must be the cider. There's Nita Burnett and Mrs. Hopkins falling on each other's necks, and they haven't spoken in two years.

[To guests:] Oh, thank you. Want us all to come and spend the summer with you? You are certainly very kind. I've no doubt we should make a jolly party.

[Aside:] I'm glad that clock is striking. They seem to have forgotten it's time to go. [To guests:] Oh, don't

hurry. [Rising.] Must you all leave me? So early? [Business of shaking hands, etc.] So glad you enjoyed it. The best time you ever had in your life? So kind of you to say so. A great success? Oh, I dare say you could improve upon it. [Pause.] Well, I'd have to consult Charlie about giving one every week. [Business of smiles, etc., as she hurries to the door.] Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye, I'm sure I've enjoyed it quite as much as you have. Good-bye, good-bye.

[Sinks into chair.] Thank goodness, it's over, and now nothing is left but the long blank future—away from Charlie. [Begins to cry.]

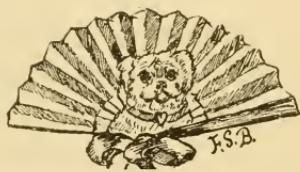
Why, there's Charlie now! [Ecstatically:] He's bringing me some roses—the darling! [Starts toward him, then stops suddenly.] Oh, I forgot. [Strikes attitude.] Stand back! You have forfeited my trust in you forever. I'll never speak to you again, and I'm going home and apply for a divorce. You needn't ask me what's the matter—you didn't order the tea and cakes, and Mrs. Sampson broke one of her false teeth on a Bent's cracker,—I saw her!

[Pause, then very solemnly:] Charlie, don't imperil your soul by saying you ordered them sent. I wouldn't believe you if you were on your dying knees—there, he's gone! I should think he might have pleaded with me a little bit, but it wouldn't have made any difference. I'll never, never trust a man again as long as I live.

[Turns to back of stage.] What, Bridget? Mr. Brown, grocer? Tell him I won't see him—I don't know any Mr. Brown. [Aside:] O my broken heart! [Turns again.] What is it, Bridget? O Mr. Brown. [Freezingly:] You insisted upon seeing me? [Pause.] What? My husband

ordered—*ordered*—tea and cakes [*tragically*]—go on, Mr. Brown, go on. Left at 78 instead of 98—your mistake? [*Wringing hands.*] Oh, what have you done, Mr. Brown? Your pound of Oolong and your box of five o'clock teas have wrecked my happiness like so much dynamite. I forgive you, Mr. Brown—but go.

[*Rushes to window.*] There's Charlie now! [*Waves frantically.*] Charlie! Charlie! He's going down the path. He won't look back. Charlie—dear! He turns! [*Throws him a kiss.*] He smiles! He's coming back! [*Returns to center.*] That Cuban tea will make me the talk of the town, but I don't care [*clasps hands ecstastically*]—Charlie loves me!



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